

to the needs of Maine's most vulnerable populations.

On the national level, Veterans of Foreign Wars and each of its State chapters have played a central role in the passage of nearly every important piece of veterans' legislation over the last 100 years, including the GI bills that have helped millions of veterans pursue education and training opportunities since 1944. VFW champions several major youth education and scholarship programs, such as Voice of Democracy, a competitive audio-essay scholarship that awards nearly \$2 million annually to students in grades 9–12. VFW and Auxiliary members participate in thousands of community service initiatives and major philanthropic campaigns each year. VFW also performs important work abroad, advocating for prisoners of war and servicemembers who remain missing in action.

Throughout our Nation's history, America's veterans have put themselves in harm's way overseas so that we may enjoy freedom at home. A testament to Maine's dedication to this cause is the number of veterans per capita in our State, which consistently ranks as one of the highest in the Nation. Day in and day out, the Maine VFW works to support these veterans and their communities and has done so for a century. On behalf of a grateful nation, I would like to honor and thank the Maine VFW for these 100 years of service. Its steadfast support for servicemembers, veterans, and their families continues to change the lives of Americans at home and abroad.

#### ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

##### REMEMBERING BRIGADIER GENERAL CHARLES E. FLEMING

• Ms. DUCKWORTH. Madam President, I rise today to pay tribute to the remarkable life of Retired BG Charles E. Fleming, a 35-year veteran of the Illinois Army National Guard who passed away on September 8, 2021.

General Fleming was a graduate of the University of Illinois, Western Illinois University, and the U.S. Army War College. He honorably served his country in the Army National Guard from 1970 to 2005, obtaining the rank of brigadier general. He assumed duties as assistant adjutant general in September of 2001 and was responsible for the preparation and deployment of Illinois Army National Guard units in support of Operations Santa Fe and Enduring Freedom immediately following the September 11, 2001, terrorists' attacks, and the beginning stages of the National Guard's transition from a strategic reserve to an operational force.

General Fleming served as principal assistant to the adjutant general in all matters pertaining to supervision and management of the Illinois Department of Military Affairs and the Illi-

nois Army National Guard. Throughout his military career, he achieved many awards and decorations including: the Meritorious Service Medal, Army Commendation Medal, National Defense Service Medal, the Humanitarian Service Medal, and the Army Service Ribbon.

General Fleming also molded citizens as a teacher for Kewanee School and a principal and superintendent of schools for the Cuba School District and founding assistant commander of the Chicago Military Academy at Bronzeville. He leaves behind his wife of 53 years, Gayle, and their 2 children, daughter Nichole and son Robert. May his legacy of service and kind spirit serve as an inspiration to us all. ●

#### RECOGNIZING CLEAR CUT PHOCUS, LLC

Mr. PAUL. Madam President, as ranking member of the Senate Committee on Small Business and Entrepreneurship, each week, I recognize an outstanding Kentucky small business that exemplifies the American entrepreneurial spirit. This week, it is my privilege to recognize Clear Cut Phocus, LLC of Louisville, KY, as the Senate Small Business of the Week.

Growing up in Louisville, John Mittel dreamed of being a doctor. As a competitive swimmer, he developed an interest in health and fitness. John's passion for innovation and engineering led him to the University of Louisville, where he earned a bachelor of science in industrial engineering. John then enrolled at the University of Louisville School of Medicine to pursue his childhood dream. Like many students, John relied on coffee, energy drinks, and soda for a caffeine boost. One night, during a late-night study session, John thought, Why not just put caffeine in water? Over the next 2 years, he worked with his mentor, Tom O'Grady, to turn that idea into a business. They spent most of 2016 developing their brand and fine-tuning the Phocus formula, launching their product in 2017. After graduating from medical school in 2018, John deferred his residency in ophthalmology to continue building his company.

Today, Phocus is a thriving small business providing consumers nationwide a healthy alternative to the traditional energy drink. Headquartered in Louisville, Phocus recently celebrated its fourth anniversary. To date, Phocus has developed 11 flavors of sparkling and regular water infused with caffeine extracted from green tea, electrolytes, and the amino acid L-theanine. Unlike traditional energy drinks, Phocus beverages have zero calories and are free of sweeteners, sodium, and additives. Phocus beverages are available at several regional and national retailers and are featured in over 200 corporate offices across America. In 2020, Phocus Cola was named the Best New Product at BevNET's Best of 2020 Awards.

Like many small business owners, John and Tom are actively involved in

their community. Locally, Phocus regularly supports community organizations, including the Louisville City Football Club's youth soccer clinics and the American Junior Golf Association's Justin Thomas Junior Championship. During the holiday season, Phocus has teamed up with ESPN Louisville for its "Cram the Van" toy and clothing drive for children in need. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the company donated 200,000 cans of Phocus to 472 hospitals and healthcare facilities across 40 States. In May of 2021, their "Buy One. Gift One. A Case for Teachers." program donated cases of Phocus to teachers nationwide in recognition of Teacher Appreciation Month. Phocus's community involvement, success, and products have been profiled in local and national outlets, including WDRB, WAVE3, Louisville Courier-Journal, Louisville Business Journal, MarketWatch, Fox News, and CNBC.

Clear Cut Phocus, LLC is a remarkable example of the resilience and adaptability of locally owned small businesses. Small businesses, like Phocus, form the heart of towns across Kentucky and play a critical role in Kentucky's beverage industry. Congratulations to John, Tom, and the entire team at Phocus. I wish them the best of luck, and I look forward to watching their continued growth and success in Kentucky, and beyond.

#### MESSAGES FROM THE PRESIDENT

Messages from the President of the United States were communicated to the Senate by Mr. Swann, one of his secretaries.

#### EXECUTIVE MESSAGES REFERRED

In executive session the Presiding Officer laid before the Senate messages from the President of the United States submitting sundry nominations which were referred to the appropriate committees.

(The messages received today are printed at the end of the Senate proceedings.)

#### EXECUTIVE REPORTS OF COMMITTEE

The following executive reports of nominations were submitted:

By Mr. DURBIN for the Committee on the Judiciary.

Rahul Gupta, of West Virginia, to be Director of National Drug Control Policy.

Elizabeth Prelogar, of Idaho, to be Solicitor General of the United States.

(Nominations without an asterisk were reported with the recommendation that they be confirmed.)

#### INTRODUCTION OF BILLS AND JOINT RESOLUTIONS

The following bills and joint resolutions were introduced, read the first